



What has the Oxton Society ever done for us?

Probably less than the Romans but it has had a big impact on anyone who lives, works in, or visits Oxton. If you want to judge for yourself the Wirral Archives Service is running a workshop on 2nd May on 'the Legacy of the Romans in the North West' ([wirral.gov.uk](http://wirral.gov.uk/workshops) workshops). The Society adopted an overall strategy in March 2011 with four aims :

- support improvements in the quality of buildings and the townscape
- increase awareness of Oxton's history, architecture, and environment
- build community and business involvement
- develop the organisational and financial basis for it's activities.

The Society's role in maintaining and improving the quality of the village's environment is a core function. The sections on trees and planning are examples. The History Group continues to tell the story of Oxton, and their supplement and the details of their walks show how they do it.

The Contribution of Secret Gardens.

This is the major event of the Society's year. It has grown to include many activities in the village, and become a large logistical exercise. The day has been central to the strategic aims of community involvement and financial sustainability.

Community Involvement.

One aspect of community involvement has been the willingness of garden owners to share the secret of what is behind the sandstone walls. Since 2001 over ninety have done so, and in the two years 2009 and 2010 thirty gardens were open on the day. In those years over 4,000 adult tickets were sold and in recent years it has been around 3,000. In the most recent survey 37% of visitors were from the Oxton postcode area, 48% were from the rest of the Wirral, and 15% from further afield. The event has significantly raised Oxton's profile.

Volunteers are vital to running the event, and we rely on local people and the participating charities. Calls for volunteers for this year's events are on page 3. Support for community activities which is year round comes from the funds which the day provides for the year's nominated charities. Since the event started in 2001 it has raised £225,000 for local charities.

Three charities are now supported each year, mainly on a three year rotating cycle. This year's charities are :

Birkenhead Youth Club. The club does not receive any funding from the Council, so relies on donations and volunteers. Against a background of a lack of public amenities it provides activities for the young people of Birkenhead. There are over 800 members, with 50 to 100 young people attending the club five nights a week.

Terral Morgan Memorial Fund. This local charity supports people diagnosed with cancer through the provision of stair lifts and wheelchair ramps. This increases the choices available to people and allows them to leave hospital and benefit from the comfort of their own homes. Funding from SG will enable the trust to provide additional domestic aids and adaptations, and raise awareness of the Fund's work.



Wirral Women and Children's Aid, is a small independent domestic abuse refuge. They have accommodation for twelve families twelve women and up to twenty eight children, who stay on average for six months. An outreach team ensures families are never without support, even after they leave and return to the community. SG funds in the past have been used to take children away for the weekend.

The items in this newsletter on Jo Stakes and the **Green Shop** illustrate another use of SG funding, and the involvement of charities in helping run the day. Businesses have also become increasingly involved in Secret Gardens, and a change this year is that much of the activity in the village is being organised by Kate Wyness from Green's. A new feature will be artisan food stalls in the village centre.

Financial Sustainability.

Secret Gardens has been the main source of funding for the Society's own activities as well as support for charities. Membership fees cover the management and running of the Society, with any projects relying on SG funding. Since 2001 over £100,000 has been used for very visible initiatives such as the hanging baskets and Christmas lights in the village. The tree planting fund and the design awards also rely on this income.

The need for a review of the Society's strategy.

The strategy was formulated in 2011 and needs to be revisited to reflect changes since then. Secret Gardens has been remarkably successful, but the growth in scale and scope of the event poses significant organisational challenges. The Society has organised a strategy workshop on 18th. April and one item on the agenda will be the future of Secret Gardens. Later editions of the Newsletter will cover the review.

Secret Gardens Please can you help?

Each year Secret Gardens needs over 300 volunteers so that the event can be run efficiently and, more importantly, SAFELY! You could think of yourself as ‘cabin crew’ – there for the visitors’ comfort but primarily for their safety.

So if you can be a member of our ‘cabin crew’ for this year’s Secret Gardens, we need about three hours of your time. Amongst the jobs we might ask you to do will be helping visitors, stewarding in gardens, selling tickets, or helping on the raffle.

To volunteer please contact Lesley McGarrity on alsr.mcgarrity@tiscali.co.uk

Prizes for the Grand Charity Raffle.

This raffle is special – ticket buyers choose which prize they would like to enter so we need plenty of ideas to tempt them. If you have any new (or good as new) things that don’t quite fit in your house let us find someone who can give them a new home and help out our charities into the bargain. Just a few ideas are :

Cookery books that don’t tempt you but could be loved by someone else

Kitchen equipment – that crock pot could find a new home

Toys – children have a habit of growing too big for things, nearly new items might tempt our ticket buyers

Gardening books or furniture

Our raffle wrapping team will need prizes by 2nd May so that they can box or wrap them. The team are happy to accept donations of money so they can buy things either to add to donated items or to be prizes on their own. Please contact Lesley McGarrity on alsr.mcgarrity@tiscali.co.uk

Calling All Cake Makers!

The Oxton Society Café at The Hub is one of the best money raisers for Secret Gardens, raising money for partner charities as well as the Oxton Society.

Without generous donations of home baked cakes the ‘café’ would not be such a success. Please could you bake a cake or two to help to supply the Oxton Society Café. If you can please contact Monica Toosey on pmtoosey@sky.com or 652 1653 so that she can include your contributions in her planning.

Please wrap your cake in tinfoil, labelling it with which type of cake it is. Any plate or tray should have your name and contact number attached to it, so any stray plates can make their way home after the event. Cakes should be delivered to 8 Mount Pleasant on Saturday 12th May.

Unfortunately we cannot accept cakes with fresh cream as we do not have enough fridge space.

Thank you in advance for your contributions.

Arts and Crafts Stalls.

Pitches for arts and crafts stalls are available at the Secret Gardens event. They are located in Mount Pleasant by The Hub, where refreshments, the raffle, and music attract visitors on the day. On average over 4000 people visit the gardens.

There are three partner charities which benefit from the money raised by the event, so pitches are not available for other charities. Similarly there are a range of refreshment providers so there is no opportunity for other food outlets.

If you are interested in applying for a pitch please contact Lynda Roberts on lrobertslynda@gmail.com who will provide you with information on the event, the pitches, and how to apply. The pitches will be sold on a first come basis.

For Those With Green Fingers.

The friends of the Arno are running the plant stall again this year. It has been a great success thanks to the many green fingered people who have grown, split, and potted on plants to be sold. We hope you are already taking cuttings, collecting plants, and growing seedlings for this year’s plant stall. If you are splitting herbaceous plants, digging up seedlings, or have anything to spare, please put them into pots and let us have them to sell. *They can be delivered during the few days before Sunday 12th May either to :*

1 Ingestre Road or

3 Fairclough Lane.

If no-one is at home leave them by the porch at Ingestre Road, or in the courtyard to the right of the front door at Fairclough Lane.

Please label them if you know what they are, particularly if they are rare. If you would like them to be collected or have any queries, please phone Peter on 652 1027, or Alison on 652 6492.

Any unwanted terracotta pots, gardening tools or books would also be most welcome.



The Green Shop, Oxton's Community Centre.

Open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, it sells new and second hand donated clothes and other goods. The sales support the whole project which includes a big, comfy space as the base for a wide range of activities.

There is a strong emphasis on things for children to do, including a book and toy library. It is hoped that a parent and toddlers group, Woodchips, can be run again in the future. This is the junior version of the Woodcraft Folk which is for older children. The Woodcraft Folk have received funds from Secret Gardens which have been used for a 'play out' project to encourage creative games for kids, in outdoor spaces like the Arno. Woodcraft Folk volunteers Laura Penn, Claire Robinson, and Jennie McLaren organise the children's activities at the Secret Gardens event, and the Christmas lights switch on.

Activities for adults include meditation and yoga, knitting, arts and crafts, a women's group, and a branch of 'the Reader' a national shared reading scheme. People are invited to drop in, have a cup of tea, get involved, or just give or buy goods from the shop.

Another Secret Garden

Heading down Slatey Road from the Williamson Art Gallery, you might think the next large green space you will reach is Birkenhead Park. You would in fact have passed some high stone walls after the old St John's vicarage, once home to the family of climber George Mallory. Behind these walls over 50 local people have been busy during the last twelve months bringing a secret garden back to life. There is a new gate in the wall with the words 'Callister Garden'.

Edward Fletcher Callister was a wool merchant who lived in Tranmere. In 1925 he established a charitable trust 'for the welfare of girls and young women in Birkenhead' and raised money to buy the garden. At one time it contained a tennis court and a pavilion and in the 1960's the YMCA and the WRVS hosted Strawberry teas in the garden. More recently it was used by a training scheme but has been disused since 2004. A year ago, five new trustees were appointed and the work of reclamation began.

If you would like to get involved in this or if you know anything about the garden or the Callister family please contact callistertrust@gmail.com For more information follow us on Twitter@callister_trust or find us on Facebook @callistertrust





Joanna Stakes

Jo Stakes runs the Green shop together with Seb Cowden in the heart of Oxtton Village. Jo has been working in the shop for twenty years and says the shop is like a community centre. It is a lively drop-in attracting a wide range of customers and friends. It is also where the Woodcraft Folk hold their regular meetings.

Jo met her partner Alan over 30 years ago when

he was working for Mencap in Blackpool. They have three grown up children. Jo was born in Wetherby, the middle child in a family of five. Her father worked for Allied breweries and was transferred to Burton-on-Trent when Jo was 12. She moved from a comprehensive school to a Girls Grammar School where the pupils wore berets and boaters. She left after sitting her A levels but she wasn't academically inclined and already showed more interest in being involved in the Community. She worked for a while in Burton market and was a volunteer for Help the Aged. When she was 18 she attended College in Manchester but soon followed her main wish to be involved in Youth work and other community projects such as Women Refuges, organising crèche facilities and the Homeless.

After moving to Oxtton village, Jo's life took on a new meaning. A friend asked her to join her at a Buddhist meeting one afternoon. She was totally absorbed during the meeting and left feeling that she'd changed. "I knew I felt better" Jo said and has been an active member of the Buddhist movement ever since, going to meetings three to four times a week.

Jo believes strongly that the the Green Shop is not only a place where people can make donations to Charity by bringing clothes and other items to raise funds, but also as a place to meet for a friendly chat and support. In this way the Green shop is Oxtton village's community centre.

1. What is your earliest memory?

Grandma's kisses - shall I meet the bright red- lipsticked mouth or hang back and have my head poked by Artex?

2. What are you most proud of doing?

I'm proud of attacking my pride - when I remember!

3. Who would play you in the film of your life?

Brenda Blethyn

4. I think people would be surprised to know this about me?

I'm 59 not 29 and I have made a stone ice cube in Finland.

5. Looking back, do you regret any lost or missed opportunities in your life?

Occasionally regret I'm quite lazy, more effort needed!

6. Which famous person do you most admire?

Buddha

7. What do you like about Oxtton?

I definitely see Oxtton as Birkenhead. I love living here, close to everything: the coast, Liverpool, local fairs etc, the Williamson and most of all, the people.

8. What changes or improvements would you like to see in Oxtton Village

Reliable cash machines

Less dog poo.

Maybe Pedestrianisation? this would cause people to slow down and encourage them to have a chance to meet

Local What's on

Williamson Art Gallery and Museum

Open Wednesday to Sunday 10am - 5pm Fully accessible, cafe.

Exhibitions

30th March - 5th May: Open Art & Photography Exhibition

From 4th May : Six Vessels.

17th May - 9th June Wirral Met Degree Show

Musical Events

4th May: Annie Long Jazz Trio, 2pm Free

Weekly from 25th May - August: Sunday Serenades.

There are various courses and events which can be booked online at williamsonartgallery.org

Oxton History Walks

The stories of events in the village, and people from its history told entertainingly by on Oxton Society Guide on organised walks.

East Walks: Fairview Road, South Bank, Arno Road

15 May, 22 May, 17 August, 21 September

West Walks: Village Road, St Saviours, Wellington Road.

11 May, 8 June, 20 July, 18 September.

East and west walks begin in the village centre by the post box CH43 5SP

Arno Walks: Ingestre Road, Birch Road, Woodchurch Road

27 April, 25 May, 6 July, 14 September.

Starts by the play area near Sainsburys car park CH42 8PQ

New for 2019

Williamson walks: Slatey Road, Devonshire Place, Beresford Road

19 May, 22 September,

Starts at the Williamson Art Gallery, CH43 4UE

A new Blue Plaque

On 15th June this year, the Society will install the third in its planned series of Blue Plaques to commemorate people of note who were associated with Oxton. Vasily Petrenko, Chief Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra has generously agreed to unveil the Plaque in memory of the composer Cyril Scott, who was born in Oxton in 1879 and lived as a child at 11 Village Road. Scott's music achieved fame at the start of the 20th Century, when he was considered to be one of the few 'modernists' on the English musical scene. Although much of his later extensive body of music failed to achieve the same popularity, there has, in the last twenty years, been a revival of interest in his work and much of it is now available in recorded form.

This newsletter's History Periodical contains more detailed information on the composer.

On the same day, in Birkenhead Priory, a painted glass window by the late artist David Hillhouse that portrays Cyril Scott and his Guitar Sonata, written for Segovia in 1927, will be dedicated, and there will be a live performance of the Sonata. The Williamson Art Gallery's Summer Serenade programme on the following day will also include works by Scott. Further details of the events will be available on the Williamson's website (www.williamsonartgallery.org) and the Oxton Society website nearer the time.



Trees are a vital part of Oxton's attraction and were specifically mentioned by Wirral Borough Council (WBC) when it established the Conservation Area in 1979. The tree cover distinguishes Oxton from much of its surroundings as the view of the ridge illustrates quite dramatically. The Society has an important role in protecting this important amenity, as well as supporting new planting to ensure it will be enjoyed in the future.

The Tree Group.

Wirral Borough Council

WBC have the statutory responsibility to consider applications for tree work in the Conservation Area, and have asked the Society to advise on their impact. The Society established a Tree Group to perform this function.



Their Code of Practice has recently been revised and the full text is available on the Society's website. When applications for work which is visible from public spaces are referred from the Council, the Group will offer to meet the applicant. In the event of the offer not being taken up they will view the proposed work from the highway or adjacent public space. The Group will then comment to the Council having considered the condition of the tree, and the impact of the work on the treescape and locality.

The Tree Planting Fund.

The Society encourages the planting of trees on member's land, in positions which can be publicly viewed. The fund pays for the planting of trees which will grow to be the medium or large specimens which will enhance the future treescape. Over fifty trees have been supplied and planted by Port Sunlight Village Trust since the scheme was launched in 2006.

Despite finding unexpectedly difficult ground requiring time consuming excavations, the team from Port Sunlight planted the latest four trees in March.



tree planting in the Shrew car park by Port Sunlight Village Trust gardeners Nicky Evans and Luke Derbyshire).

Trees and Planning

WBC decides all planning applications and applications for tree work. It invites the Society to comment and to present informed comments for the protection and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The Society has been consulted on nine applications for tree work since the last newsletter. At the following addresses there were no objections to the proposals, and no further comments to WBC :

46 Birch Road CA/19/008

7 Victoria Mount CA/19/0020

10 Kylemore Road CA/19/0025

46 Village Road T/19/0041

10 Croft Edge T/19/0045.

Comments were made in relation to :

West Ridge Lodge CA/19/0006. No objection to the proposal to reduce the lateral spread of a tree, and to remove a conifer, if the work is carried out professionally. No objection to work on an adjacent property where an avenue of mature trees adds significantly to the treescape but has received little attention over a number of years.

Rosemount Park T/19/0024.

No objection to the sensitive and professional shaping of two holly trees.

48 Birch Road CA/19/0007. No objection to the removal of the Leylandii or to the removal of the Pitisporum but recommend a suitable replacement.

18 Arno Road CA/19/0005. No objection to crown reduction and ground thinning of a maple but caution as the roots are adjacent to a wall showing signs of cracking.

The Society has been consulted on three planning applications.

7 Victoria Mount APP/19/00008. No objection to the double-storey rear extension, habitable light well, and landscaping with double drive and dropped kerb, subject to the use of matching materials, and the retention of the original gate pillars.

46 Village Road APP/19/000051. No objections to the minor structural alterations.

2 Village Road (former bank site) **APP/19/00225.** Support for the proposal for a change of use from offices to 8 residential apartments at first and second floor level, which is a realistic response to market conditions.

Full details of all applications are on the Society's website.



Keeping in touch - some of our contact details have changed

Facebook - no changes, search for the Oxton Society

Twitter - no changes, @oxtonsociety2

website has changed to www.theoxtonsociety.co.uk

General enquiries - info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

Membership - membership@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

History - history@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

Secret Gardens - secretgardens@theoxtonsociety.co.uk

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome and should be sent to the Editor by email to info@theoxtonsociety.co.uk or by post to the Secretary, 4 Willan Street, CH43 5ST.

Do you have an email address? If you are not receiving e-mails with news updates, your current email address is not in the database. *Please send it to:*

membership@theoxtonsociety.co.uk